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Mandatory Review
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MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

You asked that I put in writing my recollection of the subjects discussed at the meeting with President Eisenhower at the White House on Thursday, January 19. My notes taken at the meeting are not complete, but they indicate that the following statements were made:

A. With respect to Laos:

1. President Eisenhower advised against unilateral action by the United States in connection with Laos.

2. The President stated that the British and French were reluctant to fulfill their obligations under the SEATO Treaty.

3. Secretary Herter stated that if the Phoumi government requested aid from SEATO, he, Herter, believed we would be bound by our obligations under the SEATO Treaty to supply such aid. In this event, he stated he believed the British would probably fulfill their treaty obligations, but that the French would not.

4. Herter added that if a political settlement in Laos is not possible, we must support the Royal Laotian Government's request for SEATO intervention.

5. President-elect Kennedy inquired of President Eisenhower whether, in the event of intervention in the Laotian conflict by either the United States or SEATO, the Sino-Soviet bloc could be expected to counter with forces in excess of those provided by either the SEATO nations or the United States. President Eisenhower's answer was not completely clear, but he implied that the Sino-Soviet bloc could support the Father Lao with resources of men and materiel substantially larger than those which the SEATO nations could be expected to provide for the support of the Royal Laotian Government.

6. Secretary Herter stated that the introduction of communist members into the Laotian Government would undoubtedly lead to subversion of the government, and the ultimate replacement of a coalition government with a communist government. President Eisenhower replied he was not certain that this would be the result; he believed it might be possible to maintain indefinitely a coalition government including representatives of the communists.

7. President Eisenhower stated without qualification, "If Laos is lost to the Free World, in the long run we will lose all of Southeast Asia."

8. President-elect Kennedy asked, "What action can be taken to keep the Chinese Communists out of Laos?" There was no answer to this question from President Eisenhower.

Declassified by: Executive Secretary, DoI
Date: 25 Jan 1985

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B. With respect to Cuba:

1. President Eisenhower stated in the long run the United States cannot allow the Castro Government to continue to exist in Cuba.

C. With respect to "limited war":

1. Secretary Gates stated, "The United States can handle any number of small limited war situations at one time."

2. Secretary Gates stated that the Defense Department had taken the funds authorized by the last Congress over and above what the Department had requested, and had committed these funds to additional airlift capacity and to the design of a new cargo plane.

3. Secretary Gates stated that major problems relating to airlift capacity were:

- a. the right to over-fly;
- b. the congestion of landing fields.

D. With respect to the gold flow:

1. President Eisenhower stated the United States would be better prepared for limited war if we were to bring a division back from NATO and station the division within the continental limits of the United States. He pointed out that such action would ease the gold problem, but would require careful preparation with NATO.

2. President Eisenhower stated that if the order restricting travel of military dependents remains in effect, similar restrictions should apply to the dependents of personnel of other governmental departments, including the State Department.

Robert S. McNamara

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